

SB 622

Measure Title:

RELATING TO EDUCATION

Report Title:

UH Tuition Waivers; Dependents of Veterans

Description:

Provides tuition waivers for children of military personnel disabled, killed in the line of duty, or declared prisoners of war or missing in action.

STATE OF HAWAII
OFFICE OF VETERANS SERVICES
TESTIMONY ON S.B. No. 622, RELATING TO EDUCATION
COMMITTEES ON PUBLIC SAFETY AND MILITARY AFFAIRS AND ON
HIGHER EDUCATION
FEBRUARY 17, 2009

Good afternoon Chairs Will Espero and Jill Tokuda, Vice-Chairs Robert Bunda and Norman Sakamoto, and members of the Senate Committees on Public Safety and Military Affairs and on Higher Education.

I am Mark Moses, Director of the Office of Veterans Services (OVS). I appreciate this opportunity to comment on SB 622, which provides tuition waivers for children of military personnel, disabled, killed in the line of duty, or declared prisoners of war or missing in action.

OVS supports the intent of the bill, as long as its implementation does not impact or replace the priorities set forth in the Executive Biennium Budget for Fiscal Years 2009-2010.

Given our current economic circumstances, it may not be practical to implement this measure at this time. It most definitely is a matter worthy of consideration when the state's fiscal situation improves.

Thank you for allowing me to present the Veterans' perspective on this issue. I will respond to any questions.



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committee on Public Safety and Military Affairs and Committee on Higher Education
February 17, 2009 at 2:30 pm

by
Karen C. Lee
Associate Vice President for Student Affairs, University of Hawai'i

SB 622 – RELATING TO EDUCATION

Chairs Espero and Tokuda and Members of the Committees:

The purpose of SB 622 is to provide tuition waivers for children of military personnel disabled, killed in the line of duty, or declared prisoners of war or missing in action.

The University is very appreciative of the tremendous service that our veterans have provided to our country, and we have a number of financial assistance programs to support military personnel and their dependents. However, the University has revamped its financial aid system to largely eliminate tuition waivers.

In 2006, the University created a comprehensive financial assistance program that provided for an increase of financial aid and scholarships for needy students who attend or plan to attend the University. The University committed itself to quadruple the amount of assistance given to Hawai'i residents by 2012. The initiative eliminated much of the existing tuition waiver program because it could no longer meet the needs of today's students, creating a more flexible grant and scholarship program that could potentially give more aid beyond the cost of tuition. The existing tuition waiver program also did not allow campuses to accurately assess their revenues or budgets when so much tuition was foregone in waivers.

As a result of the new program, the University is able to assess the financial need of each student and allocate aid accordingly. Each campus can create a package of grants/scholarships, loans and work-study monies taken from a variety of sources (federal, institutional, private, and state). So far, the University has increased need-based aid to Hawai'i residents from \$4 million in 2004-05 to \$10.3 million in 2007-08.

An entitlement program such as the one that is proposed in this bill does not assess the financial need of the student, thereby creating the possibility that a student with the ability to pay for tuition does not. This means that other Hawai'i students with need will have less financial assistance available to them.

Should the legislature wish to move this bill forward, we respectfully suggest that a need-based scholarship be created and funded by the legislature for the University to award to children of military personnel who are eligible based on the above criteria.